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EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION

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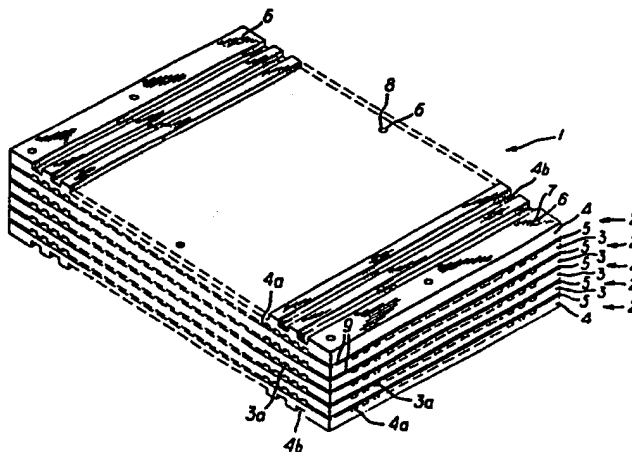
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84 Fuel cell pack with internal connection of fuel cells.

87 A fuel cell pack comprising a plurality of fuel cells and means internal of said pack for holding the cells together.



1 FUEL CELL PACK WITH INTERNAL
CONNECTION OF FUEL CELLS

Background of The Invention

5 This invention relates to fuel cells and, in particular, to fuel cells to be arranged in stack form.

In the design of fuel cell stacks, it would be advantageous if the fuel cells to be employed in the stack could be arranged in packs or units capable of independent handling. Fuel cell packs of this type would simplify the assembly
10 procedure of an overall stack and, furthermore, would greatly facilitate maintenance and repair of the stack during operation.

One technique for providing individual fuel cell packs would be to use mechanical connectors external of the
15 individual cells to connect the cells together much the same way as larger fuel cell stacks are now formed. However, this type of technique would require a significant number of mechanical connectors which would make the pack cumbersome, bulky and difficult to handle.

20 It is therefore an object of the present invention to provide a fuel cell pack which does not suffer from the above disadvantages.

It is a further object of the present invention to provide a fuel cell pack which is of relatively simple
25 construction and which can be easily assembled with and disassembled from similar fuel cell packs.

Summary of the Present Invention

In accordance with the principles of the present invention, the above and other objectives are realized in
30 a fuel cell pack comprising a plurality of fuel cells ar-

1 ranged in adjacent relationship and means internal of the
pack for connecting the cells together.

By utilizing internal means for cell interconnection,
the pack of the invention can be easily assembled with other
5 packs to form a composite fuel cell stack. Furthermore,
disassembly of the packs is now also facilitated so that
individual cells can be repaired simply by removing their
corresponding pack from the stack.

In the embodiment of the invention to be disclosed
10 hereinafter various internal means for carrying out the inven-
tion are disclosed. In particular, both chemical means and
mechanical means are described.

Description of The Drawings

15 The above and other features and aspects of the pres-
ent invention will become more apparent upon reading the follow-
ing detailed description in conjunction with the accompanying
sole drawing which illustrates a fuel cell pack in accordance
with the principles of the present invention.

20 Detailed Description

In the figure, a fuel cell pack 1 in accordance with
the principles of the present invention is shown. The pack 1
comprises four bipolar plates 3 and two end cooling plates 4.
25 The plates 3 have channels 3a in their opposing surfaces for
carrying process gases. The plates 4, in turn, have channels
4a in their inner surfaces facing toward the pack for carrying
such gases and channels 4b in their outer surfaces facing away
from the pack for carrying cooling gases.

30 Sandwiched between adjacent plates are respective

1 anode electrode, cathode electrode and electrolyte matrix
composites 5 and possibly spacers or shims. Each composite
along with its adjacent plates form a fuel cell 2 so that in
the present case the pack 1 contains five cells.

5 In accordance with the invention, the pack 1 is
further provided with means internal of the pack for connecting
the fuel cells 2 together. More particularly, as illustrated,
a plurality of through passages 6 extend through the stack and
are adapted to receive either mechanical and/or chemical means
10 for interconnecting the cells 2. Thus, a friction fitting
plug 7 or other similar internal mechanical fastener such as,
for example, a dowel pin, rivet, screw or bolt, may be inserted
in the passages 6 to thereby hold the fuel cells together.
Alternatively, a high-strength adhesive material 8 such as,
15 for example, Chem-grip BT, may be situated in the passages
6 and cured therein to provide the interconnecting bond.

The internal connecting means may take other forms
which can be used alone or in combination with the through
passages 5 and connectors therein. In particular, the connect-
20 ing means may be disposed between facing surfaces of selected
adjacent elements in each cell and selected adjacent elements
of successive cells. Thus, for example, high strength adhe-
sive strips 9 can be placed on the peripheral areas of adja-
cent plates 3 and 4 to provide interconnection of the cells 2
25 similar to interconnection achieved with the passages 5. As
mentioned, if desired for greater strength, the two forms of
interconnecting means may be used.

With the cell pack 1 fabricated as above-described,
the cell pack is free of external connectors which are often
30 cumbersome and tend to obstruct operation. Furthermore,

1 the pack can now be easily pretested and readily assembled
with other pretested packs to form a composite fuel cell
stack. Pretesting the packs provides an increased assurance
of stack performance. In fact, the increased assurance can be
5 made to approach that realizable by the testing of each cell
individually which itself is impractical if not impossible to
carry out.

The packs of the invention also facilitate testing
of the composite stack since the packs can now be individ-
10 ually scanned to locate a problem area. Furthermore, main-
tenance and repair are also facilitated, since an inoperative
pack, once located by scanning, can be removed from the stack
and replaced by another pretested pack. A composite stack
which otherwise might not have been salvagable is thus made
15 so by utilization of the cell packs of the invention. Con-
siderable savings in time, labor and expense is thus realized.

In all cases, it is understood that the above-
described arrangements are merely illustrative of the many
possible specific embodiments which represent applications
20 of the present invention. Numerous and varied other arrange-
ments can readily be devised in accordance with the principles
of the present invention without departing from the spirit
and scope of the invention.

25

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What I Claim Is

1. A fuel cell pack comprising:
a plurality of fuel cells arranged in adjacent relationship;
and means internal of said stack for holding said cells together.
2. A fuel cell pack in accordance with claim 1 wherein:
said pack has one or more passages extending there-through;
and said internal means comprises connecting means disposed in one or more of said passages.
3. A fuel cell pack in accordance with claim 1 or 2 wherein:
said connecting means comprises a chemical means.
4. A fuel cell pack in accordance with claim 3 wherein:
said chemical means is a solidified chemical material.
5. A fuel cell pack in accordance with claim 3 wherein:
said chemical means is a high-strength adhesive material.
6. A fuel cell pack in accordance with claim 1 or 2 wherein:
said connecting means comprises a mechanical means.
7. A fuel cell pack in accordance with claim 6 wherein:
said mechanical means comprises a cylindrical plug.
8. A fuel cell pack in accordance with claim 7 wherein:
said cylindrical plug comprises one of a dowel pin, a rivet, screw and a bolt.
9. A fuel cell pack in accordance with claim 1 or 2 wherein:
said connecting means comprises a chemical means and a mechanical means.
10. A fuel cell pack in accordance with claim 2 wherein:
said internal means comprises further connecting means disposed between selected surface areas of adjacent cells.

11. A fuel cell pack in accordance with claim 10 wherein:
said further connecting means is a chemical means.
12. A fuel cell pack in accordance with claim 11 wherein:
said chemical means is a high strength adhesive.
13. A fuel cell in pack accordance with claim 10 wherein:
said surface areas border the peripheries of the respective cells.
14. A fuel cell pack in accordance with claim 1 wherein:
said internal means comprises a connecting means disposed between selected surface areas of adjacent cells.
15. A fuel cell pack in accordance with claim 14 wherein:
said connecting means is a chemical means.
16. A fuel cell pack in accordance with claim 15 wherein:
said chemical means is a high-strength adhesive.
17. A fuel cell pack in accordance with claim 14 wherein:
said surface areas border the peripheries of the respective cells.
18. A fuel cell pack in accordance with claim 1, 2, 10 or 14 wherein:
said fuel cell pack further includes a first cooling means at one end of said pack;
and said internal means holds said first cooling means to said cells.
19. A fuel cell pack in accordance with claim 18 wherein:
said first cooling means comprises a first cooling plate.
20. A fuel cell pack in accordance with claim 18 wherein:
said first cooling plate has a surface facing outward of said stack which is flat.
21. A fuel cell pack in accordance with claim 18 wherein:
said first cooling plate has a surface facing outward of

said stack which has one or more channels for carrying a cooling gas.

22. A fuel cell pack in accordance with claim 19 wherein:
the fuel cell at said one end of said stack includes
said cooling plate.

23. A fuel cell pack in accordance with claim 18 wherein:
said fuel cell pack further includes a second cooling
means at the other end of said pack;
and said internal means holds said second cooling means
to said cells.

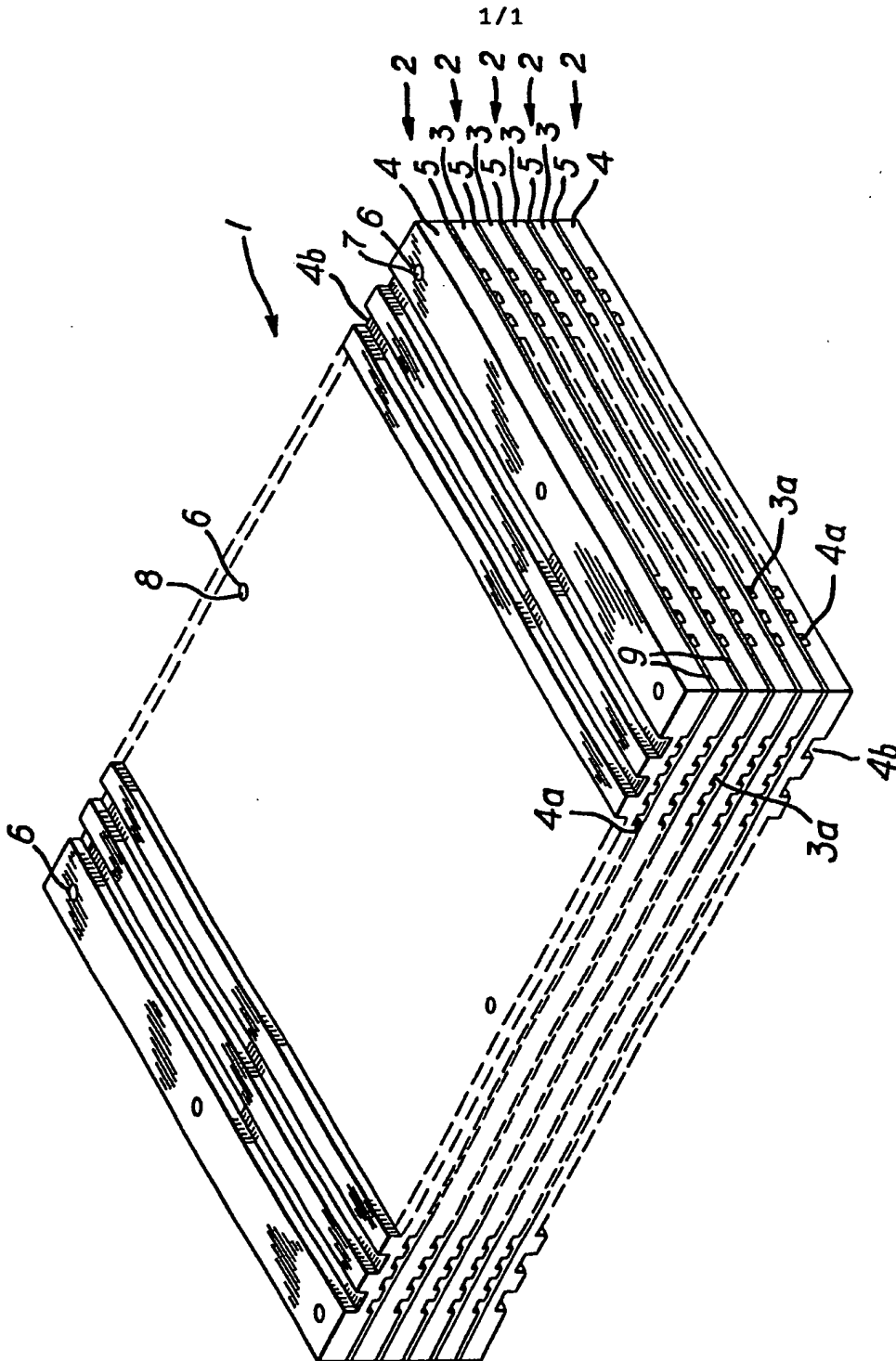
24. A fuel cell pack in accordance with claim 23 wherein:
each of said first and second cooling means comprises a
cooling plate.

25. A fuel cell pack in accordance with claim 24 wherein:
the fuel cells at said one and the other end of said pack
include the cooling plates of said first and second cooling
means, respectively.

26. A fuel cell pack in accordance with claim 24 wherein:
the surface of at least one of said cooling plates facing
outward of said stack is flat.

27. A fuel cell pack in accordance with claim 24 wherein:
the surface of at least one of said cooling plates facing
outward of said stack has channels for carrying a cooling
gas.

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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

0083937

Application number

EP 83 10 0126

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int. Cl. ³)
X,Y	FR-A-2 085 028 (AKTIEBOLAGET TUDOR) * Claims; page 3, line 19 - page 4, line 6; page 4, line 28 - page 5, line 4; page 5, lines 5-16; page 5, line 36 - page 6, line 23; page 7, lines 12-14; figures 1,3,9 *	1,2,6, 7,8,10 ,13,14 ,17	H 01 M 8/24
X,Y	DE-A-1 964 811 (SIEMENS A.G.) * Claims 1,8,10,16 *	1,3,4, 5	
X,Y	US-A-3 451 853 (D. SPAHRBIER) * Claims 1,11,12,13; figures 1,3,6,7,8; column 1, lines 45-69; column 3, line 52 - column 4, line 3; column 4, lines 24-31; column 4, line 47 - column 5, line 40; column 6, line 75 - column 7, line 3 *	1,2,4, 10,11, 14,15	TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int. Cl. ³) H 01 M 8/24 H 01 M 6/48 H 01 M 6/46
X,Y	US-A-3 589 941 (J.J. EATON) * Figures 1,2; claim 1; column 3, line 28 - column 5, line 20 *	1,2,6, 7,8,10 ,13,14 ,17	
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search THE HAGUE		Date of completion of the search 20-04-1983	Examiner D'HONDT J.W.
CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS			
X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document		T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons & : member of the same patent family, corresponding document	



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DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT				
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int. Cl. 7)	
Y	EP-A-0 039 235 (WESTINGHOUSE ELECTRIC CORPORATION) * Page 4, line 13 - page 5, line 35; figure 1 *	1,3		
A	FR-A-1 481 318 (ENERGY CONVERSION LTD.) * Page 3, right-hand column, lines 50-57; figures 4,8-10; page 4, right-hand column, line 45 - page 5, left-hand column, line 37; claim 9 *	1,6,7,8		
A	US-A-3 436 272 (R.L. GELTING) * Figures 1,2; column 1, lines 48-51 *	7,8		
A	US-A-3 441 444 (R.J. CHESNER et al.) * column 3, lines 29-40; figure 1 *	1,6,7,8		TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int. Cl. 7)
A	FR-A-1 557 803 (ALLMÄNNA SVENSKA ELEKTRISKA AKTIEBOLAGET) * Figures 2,3,4; page 4, right-hand column, lines 3-31 *	1,3		
A	US-A-3 126 302 (R.D. DRUSHELLA) * Column 2, lines 19-24, lines 30-35; column 5; figure 4 *	1,3,4,5		
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The present search report has been drawn up for all claims				
Place of search THE HAGUE		Date of completion of the search 20-04-1983	Examiner D' HONDT J.W.	
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0083937

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A	GB-A-2 025 119 (ENERGY RESEARCH CORP.) * Figures 1,4,5; claim 3; page 3, lines 36-54 *		

A	US-A-3 717 505 (TRUMAN F. UNKLE) * Page 1, column 1, line 53 - column 2, line 21; column 4, lines 38-51 *		

			TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int. Cl. *)
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search THE HAGUE		Date of completion of the search 20-04-1983	Examiner D' HONDT J.W.
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